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Ivan the Terrible in  
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By

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## I. Introduction

Ivan the Terrible (Tsar Ivan IV) is one of the most frequently studied figures in Russian history. He receives so much attention because he occupied a pivotal position in the historical growth of his country. His reign saw Russian expansion to the South and East with the conquests of Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia. The seeds of contact with the West which were cultivated by Peter the Great were planted by Ivan. Also of great interest is his policy of dividing the country into two halves, the oprichnina. Its attendant violence and social and economic devastation have been topics of a fiery debate among historians through the ages. Many believe that Ivan suffered from a mental illness which caused him to act irrationally and others believe that he was a wise ruler who had his sights set on the future.

The debate on the nature and consequences of Ivan's reign is due to the paucity of sources on the period. In 1626, the Kremlin's archives burned and with it many of the records of sixteenth-century Muscovite society. The sources that exist are mainly the accounts of foreign travellers to Russia, such as Giles Fletcher and Heinrich Staden. The accuracy of these writings is questionable, however. Many of them were written several years after Ivan's death and many were based on stories that the authors heard second- or third-hand at best. Others were obvious exaggerations of

conditions that were meant to persuade the authors' sovereigns to approve their proposals for action against Russia. Heinrich Staden's work is an example of this last type of work.

The other major literary source on Ivan's reign is the correspondence between the Tsar and Prince Andrei M. Kurbskii who fled from Russia to Lithuania to escape Ivan's wrath. Much of the personality and thought process of the Tsar is interpolated from these letters. The events of Ivan's childhood are set in the correspondence. There are large gaps in the knowledge of historians, but they use the available sources, especially Kurbskii to offer conjecture in order to complete the picture of Ivan's reign.

Ivan IV is also important because he demonstrates the differences between Russian and Western historians. Many of the Russians do not absolutely condemn the autocrat for his brutality. They accept it for the simple reason that violence has been such a constant force in Russian society, from the Mongol conquest of Russia to Stalin's massive purges. The historians of the West, on the other hand, treat him as an aberration. His oprichnina was a legalized reign of terror that is completely unjustifiable in their opinion. Another difference is that Russian historians of the Soviet period concentrate on class interests and class conflicts whereas Westerners deal with conflicts between individuals or small groups.

## II. Russian Historians

An analysis of the multitude of interpretations of the reign of Ivan IV must begin with Russian historians. The examination of the trends in Russian historiography sheds light on the interpretations of American and English historians. Russian historical work on the Tsar shows visible effects of manipulation by contemporary rulers. There have been broad changes in the prevailing views on the nature of Ivan's reign. Some of these changes are attributable to the discovery of previously unknown sources and some to the forced interpretation of a more recent Russian dictator.

The Communist revolution of 1917 is a key event in the periodization of Russian historical work on Ivan IV. Before the Soviet era, and especially before the rule of Josef Stalin, Russian historians were free to interpret Ivan's reign without restriction. There were two predominant views of Ivan at the time. The first is epitomized by Sergei F. Platonov who was a member of the St. Petersburg school of history which believed that Ivan faced unyielding opposition from the traditional aristocracy whose power was based on their ancestral votchina landholdings. The Tsar instituted the oprichnina to crush the power of the aristocracy by exiling or executing many of them and confiscating their land. He was reacting to the apparent attempts to steal his power through the chosen council (izbranaia rada). Platonov recognized that Ivan's personality perverted the oprichnina and

facilitated grave excesses by the oprichniki. On the confusion that was inherent in the oprichnina's terror, Platonov claimed that "the Tsar's implementation of this plan was accompanied by such a tangle of details that he bewildered his contemporaries, for they could not grasp the thrust of his endeavor."<sup>1</sup> On final analysis, the oprichnina was a necessary action in the struggle against the aristocracy and it ended successfully: "the system of princely landowning was shattered."<sup>2</sup>

V.O. Kliuchevskii typified the second major interpretation. He was of the Moscow historical school which stressed the importance of understanding Ivan's personality and mental condition in appraising the oprichnina. His writing includes a "Character Sketch of Ivan IV"<sup>3</sup> in which he explained that "either nature or his upbringing deprived him of all moral balance, and so inclined him always to take the evil course whenever he found himself confronted with even the smallest difficulty in life."<sup>4</sup> Kliuchevskii suggested that Ivan would have been an interesting subject for any psychologist. As Ivan tried to establish absolute power, he came into conflict with the aristocracy whose power, he claimed, was based on complex networks of social traditions and connections. Kliuchevskii pointed out that Ivan instituted the oprichnina only after more moderate methods had failed. He was completely unforgiving in asserting that the oprichnina did not represent society's true nature, but demonstrated Ivan's mental imbalance. The aristocracy was allegedly the

target of the oprichnina, but relatively few boyars were its victims. Kliuchevskii concluded that the net effect for Russian society was disastrously unsuccessful. "He believed that the ruler, acting in the context of tensions between the autocracy and the aristocracy, had torn apart a social fabric which was being rewoven."<sup>5</sup> He maintained that Russia would have experienced the same future progress without Ivan and he simply caused unnecessary hardship. Ivan's importance to history is therefore of a negative nature.

Platonov and Kliuchevskii are representative of the two major pre-revolutionary schools of thought on Ivan's reign, and as such, they illustrate a shortcoming of earlier works--they concentrated almost exclusively on the oprichnina as the central event of Ivan's reign. They downplayed the fact that regardless of the oprichnina's devastating immediate effects, it consumed only seven years of Ivan's fifty year reign. His value to the future can only be accurately calculated after analyzing all fifty years. The oprichnina is tempting to the student of history because it is such an aberration in the course of normal human events. Attention is diverted away from the less "interesting" events of Ivan's rule, but another more recent Russian autocrat, Josef Stalin, came to Ivan's rescue. Stalin brought all aspects of Soviet society under his control. He dictated an official interpretation of history, including an obligatory view of Ivan IV. Stalin demanded that historians follow his view that Ivan was a "great and wise ruler" who courageously faced hostility from within and



abroad. In Stalin's view, Ivan was fighting the feudal aristocracy with the oprichnina, but he failed because he was not ruthless enough in his tactics.

Most of the works of the Stalin era are available only in Russian, so analyses of the works themselves must be examined to fully understand their interpretations. A common vein running through historiographical works on this era is the emphasis on the significance of the conference at the Moscow branch of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences in May 1956. The date of this meeting is important because it closely followed the Twentieth Party Congress where Krushchev initiated the policy of "de-Stalinization". The conference was intended to effect a reevaluation of Ivan and his reign. The remarks of S.M. Dubrovskii at this meeting are crucial in this analysis of the historical works of the Stalin period.

Dubrovskii, a specialist in the Stolypin reforms, lashed out against the historical publications of the Stalin period. His major target was the work of R.Iu. Wipper who bowed neckly to the view of Stalin. Wipper was open to attack by Dubrovskii because his background did not coincide with his analysis of Ivan; he specialized in ancient Greece and Rome, not Russia. He had been opposed to the Bolsheviks in the Revolution of 1917, but in 1922 when he returned to Moscow from Latvia, he revised his biography of Ivan by blasting the newly discovered German sources on the oprichnina. He also added various bits of Marxist grandiloquence and comments

about the enduring aggressive nature of Germany against Russia. The third edition of his work which was published in 1947 at the height of the period of idolizing Ivan, was the most extreme example of his excessive flattery towards the Tsar and his reign. He tied German aggression to the German scholars' attempts to reevaluate the works of sixteenth-century German oprichniki, such as Heinrich Staden, in a manner that would belittle the grandeur of the Russian people:

"In the campaign the German scholars were to play the part of pioneers--to collect proof of the physical unfitness and cultural incompetence of the Slavonic race in general, and of the Russian people in particular."<sup>6</sup>

Wipper's work centered on the idea that conflict was at the core of Ivan's reign. The Tsar allied himself with the rising gentry in a battle to crush the power of the traditional aristocracy. Wipper asserted that Ivan was struggling to establish a strong centralized monarchy that could effect fairness and justice in society. He claimed that as Ivan's reign continued, especially after the start of the Livonian War, the aristocracy increasingly undertook treasonous activities in order to strengthen their position. Ivan instituted the oprichnina to eliminate the disloyalty. Wipper maintained that any cruelty associated with the oprichnina was a response to the stimulus of aristocratic sedition. He criticized those historians who concentrated on Ivan's brutality:

"The intense emphasis on Ivan's cruelties, the stern, withering condemnation of his personality,

the tendency to regard him as mentally unbalanced--this belongs to the age of sentimental enlightenment and fashionable liberalism."<sup>7</sup>

He further claimed that Ivan "cannot be accused of being over-suspicious. On the contrary, his failing was that he imposed too much confidence in the Guard and the administration he had formed."<sup>8</sup> This is an extraordinary assertion for if it is true, then literally thousands of traitors surrounded the Tsar. He even implied that Metropolitan Filipp was a conscious accomplice to the treason.

Wipper's adherence to the Stalinist view is best seen in his claim that Ivan's contemporaries misunderstood and distorted his policies, both deliberately and unintentionally, and consequently later historians have portrayed Ivan, not as a brilliant leader, but a brutal tyrant. He, however, asserted that Ivan was "a first-class talent in diplomacy and was entirely in his element when it came to international affairs."<sup>9</sup> He based his entire analysis of the oprichnina on criticizing the accounts of Staden and Schlichting who, he claimed, wrote false accounts to achieve ulterior goals.

Wipper's most glaring fault was that he overestimated Ivan's talents and abilities. He accepted all of the positive statements about Ivan and ignored the negative comments. Herein lies a problem: assuming that the positive data are true, including Ivan's accusations of treachery, then there was an appreciable portion of the population involved in the alleged treason. His treatment of Ivan as a brilliant

diplomat forgot that the Livonian War, the Tsar's largest project, was a devastating failure for Russia.

M.N. Pokrovsky's History of Russia, which first appeared in 1910, was based on a Marxist view of history. Following suit, his analysis of the reign of Ivan IV was founded on an examination of broad socio-political processes. He claimed that the Russian economy was in the middle of a slow but sweeping transformation. Feudalism was waning during Ivan's time and its decline gave rise to a market economy. His main thesis is that rather than effecting a qualitative change in Russian society and economy, Ivan's policies caused a quantitative change. The move toward a money-based economy merely accelerated in this time. Pokrovsky later contradicted himself by stating that Ivan hampered the development of a money economy. He also contradicted his statement that no qualitative changes took place by saying that Ivan brought about changes in the structure of society to facilitate the transformation of the economy.

Pokrovsky focused on the society of sixteenth-century Russia rather than on the Tsar. He denied the idea that Ivan's policies, especially the oprichnina, were intended to root out treachery. He began his study of the period by harshly criticizing the writings of Prince A.M. Kurbskii who was one of the major proponents of the idea that Ivan acted irrationally with the establishment of the oprichnina. His emphasis on the significance of society in shaping history

leads to many of the same motivations for the oprichnina as other historians propound. He claimed that the large aristocratic landholdings were liquidated because the poorer pomestchiks, the gentry, desperately needed money or land. The widespread confiscation of aristocratic lands helped to alleviate this problem.

Pokrovsky's social class argument starts with an alliance between the aristocracy, gentry, and the merchants. These groups shared common interests. For example, the three groups all benefitted from the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan; the aristocracy and the gentry got new lands and the merchants gained access to the Volga trade route. The Livonian War was a pivotal point in the breakup of this alliance. The aristocracy opposed the war and advised Ivan to cease fighting, while the gentry who were the warriors benefitted greatly from it and hoped for its continuation. The alliance was destined to fail because the two sides were diametrically opposed on ideology. The aristocracy yearned for a return to the structure of society in the past and the gentry worked for the establishment of a new social order.

According to Pokrovsky, Ivan personally intended for the oprichnina to strengthen his autocracy. This attempt was premature and would not succeed until Peter the Great's reign. Pokrovsky asserted that it was a rational policy that was prone to violence because sixteenth-century Russian society was prone to violence. He also stated that the activities

of the oprichniki were present at other times though in lesser numbers. The oprichnina, therefore, was simply the augmentation of common occurrences. He said that the departure to Alexandrova Sloboda was not unusual, in fact, it was an annual trip. He pointed out that it could not have been spontaneous because it would have required more than one day to plan--those accompanying Ivan had sufficient time to make arrangements for their wives and children to join them. He added that Ivan appeared to age twenty years, not because of a mental breakdown, but because he was raised in the ways of the past and he now had to break completely with the past. He experienced extreme anguish at the thought of turning his world upside down.

Pokrovsky concluded with two important concepts. One is that much of the depopulation and economic hardship following the oprichnina was due to the peasants' reactions rather than Ivan's policies:

"Like ants from a disturbed anthill the population ran off from these old cultivated places, seized by the oprichnina--ran off with no thought but how to save themselves from the new order of things so abruptly ushered in. It is no accident that the maximum depopulation of the county of Moscow coincides with the peak of the oprichnina."<sup>9,5</sup>

The second concept is that Ivan's reign stepped up the process of transforming society and only in later times did the aristocracy rebound and strengthen its position. Ivan's policies, he asserted, facilitated great economic progress. One fact that he ignored here is that Ivan's murdering of his son left Russia without a strong successor which led to

the Time of Trouble which may have been one of the causes of renewed aristocratic power.

Dubrovskii's attack on the Stalinist view continued with attacks on others biographies by S.V. Bakhrushin, P.A. Sadikov, and I.I. Smirnov. These three, like Wipper, overestimated Ivan as a Tsar who acted in the interest of the people. They followed the prevailing interpretation of Ivan which was decided upon by Stalin whose view was delineated in a conversation with Eisenstein, the director of Ivan Grozny, the film about Ivan's life. Stalin stated that Ivan was a "great and wise ruler,"<sup>10</sup> and he used Ivan's reign to justify his own reign of terror. Stalin, however, was not a historian and Dubrovskii castigated Bakhrushin, Sadikov, and Smirnov for blindly following his interpretation.

S.V. Bakhrushin's work was based on the premise that the pervasive social tensions were the result of a conflict of interests surrounding the Tsar's desire to consolidate his power. The rising gentry and the portion of the aristocracy who relied on court positions for their power saw that a strong centralized administration would benefit them. The landed aristocracy, on the other hand, realized that these changes would undermine their ability to own large estates and therefore maintain their own authority. According to Bakhrushin, Ivan instituted the oprichnina to achieve his goal and was completely successful in establishing a unified, centralized country. He asserted that the oprichnina was

"a reform which was cruel in form but essentially answered the purpose."<sup>11</sup> He credited Ivan with the initiative to improve Russia, but he was more restrained in his praise than Wipper.

I.I. Smirnov founded his work on the same class struggle premise that Bakhrushin used. Ivan introduced broad reforms meant to undercut the power of the aristocracy. Smirnov pointed out, also, that the gentry was a vital part in the establishment of the centralization of political administration. The aristocracy responded to Ivan's reforms by stepping up its seditious activities. The Tsar answered with the oprichnina which Smirnov, like Bakhrushin, considered to be a rational policy designed to alleviate a serious shortcoming of society. In Smirnov's opinion, the oprichnina was a sweeping success in removing aristocratic power and escorting Russia into the future.

P.A. Sadikov was another major historian of Ivan IV, who wrote in the 1920's and 1930's but whose work was published alongside Smirnov's and Bakhrushin's in the latter portion of Stalin's reign. His work was strongly adherent to the Stalinist view of Ivan's reign. His work is valuable to all historians, regardless of their interpretations, because he was not afraid to admit that the oprichnina had severe, negative effects on Russian society. He of course emphasized facts that coincided with his conclusions, but he also presented information that less scrupulous historians might conceal.



George Fedotov, in his study of Metropolitan Filipp's encounters with Ivan IV, said that Ivan instituted the oprichnina to create a new administration and a new servitor class, the gentry. The Tsar resorted to this policy because he was unable to effect the change through peaceful measures and reforms. Fedotov explained that the oprichnina, however, was not actually an escape from feudalism: "The paradox of this revolution is that, although directed against the remains of the appanage tradition, it was itself vested in appanage forms."<sup>12</sup>

Fedotov touched on the "personality" argument, saying that Ivan's maniacal condition shaped the brutality of the oprichnina. This was true, he claimed, only for its outward appearance. Inwardly, the oprichnina accomplished its goal, he asserted. He said that "the social make-up of the oprichnina also corresponded to its political goal."<sup>13</sup> He maintained that the random relocation of the gentry onto former aristocratic lands fatally interrupted the network of connections between the remaining appanage princes. He neglected to recognize, however, that the oprichnina victimized members of the service gentry and oprichniki as well as the aristocracy.

The 1956 meeting ushered in the third stage of Russian work on Ivan IV. Dubrovskii noted that Stalin painted a pretty picture of Ivan, but his view was not of a Marxist nature. The meeting concluded with an agreement amongst the

historians that an unbiased examination of Ivan and an analysis of all aspects of sixteenth-century Russian society, which would deal with the lives of common men, were needed. The two most famous works on Ivan IV, those by Platonov and Kliuchevskii, illustrated that the focus of works completed before "the meeting" was too narrow and disregarded the society which Ivan so greatly affected. They had concentrated on the oprichnina and the reasons behind it, but only scantily looked at the economic, political, and social issues of Ivan's Russia.

The decade following the meeting saw Soviet historians abide by the formula of Dubrovskii and his colleagues. Ivan was portrayed as an irrational, powerful ruler and his mistakes were amply documented. They did not shy away from Ivan's cruelty and even highlighted its senseless, excessive nature. These historians, however, focused not entirely on Ivan himself, but rather on the society. The Tsar was examined for his part in any developments in society. Soviet historians of the 1950's and 1960's attempted to determine in whose interest Ivan's policies were carried out. This approach is much more methodical and actually is a less subjective way to look at Ivan. Many earlier historians, such as Kliuchevskii, fell into the trap of trying to psychoanalyze the Tsar which is absolutely impossible to do centuries after the subject lived. The existing contemporary works offer descriptions of the state of sixteenth-century Russian soci-

ety. By examining these, historians can provide a factual, albeit incomplete, view of Russian society and in doing so, can devote considerable attention to Ivan, because in any autocratic state, the ruler plays the key role in social, economic, or political developments or reforms. Judging Ivan by his role in society eliminates the psychoanalysis and renders an assessment of the Tsar according to factual data.

There were several points of agreement among the historians of the post-Stalin period. The rising gentry and the traditional aristocracy, according to the historians, provided continual conflict throughout Ivan's reign in both social and political arenas. Some of them have asserted that there was no perceptible link between Ivan and this struggle, but others have suggested that this struggle was caused by and sustained by Ivan's policies against the old, established aristocracy. Treatment of the oprichnina has taken the form of an overall examination of society and the conflicts therein.

Many of the historians of the late 1950's and 1960's have produced monographic studies of very specific topics within Ivan's reign. They used and recognized the value of earlier studies, but they rejected most of their conclusions, being extremely careful in drawing conclusions of their own. They set about publishing lists of people who made up different groups in society which has helped to act as a cross-reference for future works. According to Robert Crumney, these historians owed a great deal to S.B. Veselovskii who

was well known for his expertise in history and related fields such as toponymy, genealogy, and historical geography.

Veselovskii was 41 in 1917 and had already established his own views which became an obstacle against his acceptance by Soviet historians. He emphasized explanations for landholding trends that failed to follow the traditional Marxist economic answer. He also neglected to discuss the Marxist stages of socioeconomic development which dominated the writings of the Stalin era. He spent his life researching the taxation, landholding, and agricultural economy of Muscovy, but late in his life, he began to write essays on the reign of Ivan IV. He followed his own beliefs, but he was wise enough to know that publication of his work while Stalin was in power would not be expedient. In 1963, the Academy of Sciences compiled and published his work on Ivan IV. The problem with the work is that it is a compilation of essays, not a total, coherently connected examination of the Tsar's reign. As Crummey noted, many sections of the book are obviously rough drafts.

Veselovskii believed that the oprichnina was a result of real social and political conflicts. He did, however, attack Platonov's view that the oprichnina was designed to counter the power of the aristocratic estates. He used the writings of Ivan's contemporaries who found the Tsar's policies incomprehensible. He asserted that Ivan had to fight against his court elites who used their power, which was

based on their positions in the military and the Boyar Duma and not on their princely estates as Platonov claimed, to increase their overall authority. When the aristocracy began to accumulate too much power at court, Ivan resolved to launch an assault on them. He abandoned Moscow for Aleksandrova Sloboda and divided the country into zemschina and oprichnina. As Veselovskii explained, Ivan actually empowered the elites with this national division by leaving the administration of the zemschina to them. It was only due to its extreme tyranny that the oprichnina was successful in destroying the power of the aristocracy.

The question of the oprichnina's social purpose was addressed by Veselovskii as well. He pointed out that Ivan attacked many of his allies while leaving many aristocratic estates untouched. Relatively few aristocrats were actually affected in comparison to the incredible economic and social upheaval that the oprichnina caused. The inconsistencies mount when one realizes that the power of the aristocracy rested not in their estates but in their court positions. Veselovskii also cited the fact that most of the aristocrats owned vast tracts of land away from their main estates. He asserted that the lands selected for the oprichnina were meant to supply revenue and land for the rising gentry which was Ivan's ally. In fact, many of those hurt by the oprichnina were actually members of the gentry. Veselovskii's argument ended up resembling Kliuchevskii's thesis that Ivan's

personality shaped the Tsar's policies in the struggle against the entrenched aristocracy. Ivan used his power to wreak havoc on the aristocracy which he saw as attempting to usurp his authority. The oprichnina not only destroyed the power of the aristocracy, it crushed any possibility of representative government.

Veselovskii's study of Ivan IV made two significant contributions to the body of work on the Tsar. While he offered no startlingly original conclusions, his collection of particular facts has provided a basis for successive historians to build upon. He also successfully dissected Platonov's view that a simple class struggle was the cause of the oprichnina. His work, however, showed the shortcoming that Dubrovskii warned against in 1956: it dealt almost exclusively with Ivan's motives and greatly ignored the enduring social results of his reforms and policies.

The historians who succeeded those of Stalin's era remained entrenched in the foundation that earlier historians had developed. They have produced a multitude of very specific monographic studies that provide factual analyses, but not original conclusions. Many new areas in the political, economic, and social worlds were brought to light in the works of these historians. They examined all of the existing interpretations and determined to what extent they fit into the factual framework that Veselovskii and his successors established. Collectively, these historians changed the

face of Soviet historical work on Ivan IV by introducing new viewpoints and methodology.

Ruslan G. Skrynnikov was one of the most prominent historians to write about Ivan IV in the 1960's. His most impressive characteristic is his meticulous examination of a wide range of sources in his works. He chronologically delineated the details of Ivan's reign, concentrating on the oprichnina, but he failed to pin down a single interpretation that can encompass his true beliefs. His writings conformed to a wide variety of popular views on Ivan's reign. Without reaching a succinct resolution, he analyzed the society and groups therein during Ivan's time in an effort to more fully understand the oprichnina. This was a valiant attempt at factual analysis, but Skrynnikov fell short because he failed to round his study out with a definite conclusion.

Skrynnikov initially appeared to follow the common view that Ivan had aligned himself with the rising gentry in a struggle against the established aristocracy. Soon thereafter, his writing increasingly described greater complexity in the network of political connections. He moved from the conflict between the crown/gentry alliance and the landowning aristocracy to a situation where the gentry joined certain court elites in enacting reforms which effected the conflict that led to the oprichnina. He then switched to an alternative explanation of the oprichnina which pitted Ivan against the last remaining appanage princes, especially the Suzdal' group,

rather than the entire aristocratic class. He neglected, however, to explicate the nature and extent of the power of these princes. He never showed that they posed a threat to the Tsar, thereby making the oprichnina a rational defensive maneuver. He claimed that these princes provided a springboard from which Ivan jumped into conflict with a wider range of groups within the aristocracy.

Skrynnikov said that the oprichnina, which began as a rational policy, was transformed into an unrestrained reign of terror. This concept brought him close to Kliuchevskii's interpretation of the oprichnina as a rational institution which later degenerated into an unbridled crime spree. Skrynnikov emphasized the role of Ivan's mental condition as well. He claimed that the Tsar's continual attention to the threats that he believed faced him shaped the policies and processes of the oprichnina. Ivan was sure that a large portion of the aristocracy was scheming to rob him of his power. He was particularly convinced that the boyars of the Novgorod area were the most heavily involved in the treason. The oprichnina became increasingly sadistic and immoral as Ivan's chosen oprichniki used their new power to commit grave injustices in order to line their own pockets. As Crummey pointed out, Skrynnikov missed the point on the issue of the Novgorod operation and other major targets of the oprichnina because he asserted that the number of people actually executed by the oprichniki was, in reality, much lower than Ivan's con-



temporaries claimed. What these chroniclers alluded to that Skrynnikov ignored was the overall impact of these massive attacks. The devastation went deeper than the numerous executions performed by the oprichniki; it included destruction of homes and churches, tearing apart of families, and extreme economic deprivation. He claimed that the oprichnina weakened the aristocracy, government administration, and the Church, but it failed to permanently break the authority of the aristocracy. Its positive effect was that it strengthened the gentry in the state bureaucracy. He was also unforgiving for the cruelty of the oprichniki: "The outrages perpetrated by members of the oprichnina were unprecedented and unjustifiable."<sup>14</sup> According to Skrynnikov, in view of the severity of the oprichnina's immorality, Ivan chose to cut short the reign of terror in 1572.

While Skrynnikov jumped between interpretations of Ivan's policies prior to the oprichnina, he stated that the oprichnina's brutality was a product of the Tsar's mental imbalance. He described the oprichnina's existence and its execution more fully than he provided the reasoning for the policy. Without ever explicitly stating a single purpose, he effectively illustrated that the oprichnina was inherently irrational because the frequent shifts in policy and selection of victims followed no discernible pattern or form. Ivan never clearly demonstrated that his policies were intended to facilitate positive social change leading to a powerful central-

ized autocracy: "the oprichnina was not consistent during the seven years it existed; it did not pursue either subjectively or objectively, a single goal, principle, or plan."<sup>15</sup> Skrynnikov concluded his study of the oprichnina with the fore-mentioned concepts, but he contradicted his own ideas about the establishment of the terror. He said that:

"The failures in foreign policy led the Tsar's counsellors to urge him vigorously to establish a dictatorship and use violence and terror to smash the opposition, but no major political decision could be taken without confirmation by the boyar council, and the known position of the council and church leaders did not augur well for the success of such an endeavor. This is the reason why the tsar was forced to perform a singular action. In an attempt to impose his will on the council of mighty feudatories he announced his abdication. He calculated that such a move would enable him to compel the council to accept proclamation of a state of emergency."<sup>16</sup>

This certainly sounds as if Ivan had a plan and at least some of those around him understood and accepted it.

A.A. Zimin was another of the important historians of the 1960's who studied Ivan IV. He used a plentitude of sources which convey various interpretations. Like Skrynnikov, Zimin was hesitant to completely refute any thesis about Ivan's reign. His work was centered on the idea that while Ivan's predecessors had subdued the other appanage princes, the actual power of the Tsar was incomplete. Ivan sought to consolidate his power and found allies in the gentry which depended upon the crown for its lands and positions. The landed aristocracy, which wished to retain the power that it enjoyed, acted as the opposition in the ensuing struggle.

Up to this point, Zimin followed the most common approach to the conflict, but he forged ahead by showing that the aristocracy was not a homogeneous group; but, was divided into princely families and boyars at the court. The princely families were Ivan's real enemies, whereas the boyars shared many of the same interests as the gentry. The boyars and gentry both relied on their power emanating from the court and not from their lands.

Zimin stated that by the middle of the sixteenth century, strengthening of the autocracy was inevitable and the questions were: How the changes would take place, and who was to benefit? He backed up this assertion by pointing out that the struggle that surrounded the Tsar in his early years was waged in order to determine where power would reside in the absence of a strong autocrat. This period of sedition amongst the court elites ended when Ivan was crowned Tsar in 1547. Ivan believed that the succession crisis of 1553 was the result of the treason that was pervasive in the court, but Zimin contended that this was not the case. He claimed that the event showed a definite factionalization in the court which led to a stronger alliance between the Tsar and gentry in the area of policy making. At this time, Ivan began to shape his government into a coalition of crown, gentry, and progressive boyars. His goals were the strengthening of his centralized administration and decreasing the power and significance of the entrenched aristocracy. Through cautious

implementation of its policies, Ivan's government allowed the aristocracy to retain many of its customary rights.

The oprichnina occupied an important place in Ivan's reign and likewise in Zimin's work. He set it against a backdrop of enduring enmity between the gentry and aristocracy which was only exacerbated by the reforms of the 1550's. Ivan recognized that the gentry needed more land and greater control over their peasants, but the traditional aristocracy stood in his way because they still owned much of the land in the form of large estates. The reform movement saw the service gentry occupying most of the positions in the army and in the centralized government, but the aristocracy was able to retain the top positions in each. This continuing situation necessitated more stringent tactics on Ivan's part, which took the form of the oprichnina.

A key to understanding Zimin's interpretation of the oprichnina is comprehending the scope of the policies as he alleged. To be successful, the oprichnina had to root out the last appanage princes, solidify the Tsar's power, and completely unify the Russian lands. Ivan's main targets were the Church, Novgorod, and the Staritsa appanage. Ivan chose the Staritsa appanage as a target because his cousin, Vladimir Staritsky lived there. During the succession crisis of 1553, Vladimir was the choice for successor to Ivan of the boyars who refused to swear allegiance to the Tsarevich. While many see irrationality and disorganization in all of these pur-

poses and victims, Zimin demonstrated that these measures were all necessary if Ivan's goals were to be met. He asserted that the oprichnina was a rational set of policies, but he transcended the statement that it evolved out of a conflict between Tsar and aristocracy. His analysis detailed the reasons that the oprichnina's conceptual diversity was indicative of its rational nature.

Beyond establishing the oprichnina's cause and initial framework, Zimin clearly illustrated that the oprichnina plunged into confusion as Ivan's persecution mania pushed the oprichniki into selecting victims throughout society. Even members of the gentry were not immune to losing their lands, positions, or lives. Moving away from its rational beginnings, the oprichnina became an unreasonable reign of terror. An analysis of its victims, as a group, reveals a microcosm of the entire society. Every group ended up suffering.

Was the oprichnina therefore unsuccessful? Zimin said that it was not entirely a failure. The aristocracy, especially the members at Novgorod and Staritsa, had posed a potential threat to Ivan's authority, so the Tsar destroyed them. In this respect, the oprichnina succeeded. Robert Crummey explained that this concept has caused a great deal of controversy. One obvious question is how much power these opposition forces wielded. After all, the military and church men of Novgorod came from Moscow originally. The Church and crown had enjoyed a reciprocally beneficial relationship and

it seems probable that Ivan's anger with some Church officials, such as Metropolitan Filipp, spilled over into an attack on the Church as a whole. Regardless of the validity of Zimin's argument, his writing has caused serious debate which is a valuable contribution in itself.

Zimin's treatment of Ivan IV is a complex body of work. He dealt with many interpretations of the Tsar's life and reign. He did not adhere to the rigid class analysis of many other historians, such as Pokrovsky, for he showed that no class was secure from Ivan's wrath. His treatment of the oprichnina was the most impressive portion of his work. He outlined the causes of the oprichnina, described its transformation as a result of the Tsar's imbalanced mind, and demonstrated that it produced many new problems while exacerbating many existing ones and failing to alleviate the major flaws in society.

N.E. Nosov's study involved elective estate institutions and the early formation of local administrative organs during Ivan's reign. He, like Zimin, asserted that many aristocrats at court were actually allies of the Tsar in his reform efforts. His work emphasized the role of economics in the history of this period. He claimed that Russia was at a critical juncture in its economic development. It could have evolved into a market economy or fallen back into feudalism. His treatment of social classes mirrored his economic viewpoint. Neither the gentry nor the aristocracy stood firm consistently

in their attitudes toward reforms or each other. Sometimes they fought each other and at other times, they joined forces to face a common enemy, as was the case in their struggle against the new merchant elite in the far North. Nosov's writing clarified that in the Russia of Ivan's time, a class analysis is useless with the continually changing alliance systems. Instead, he concentrated on the needs of the different groups and how they coincided or differed.

Nosov's main subject was the structure of Ivan's administration. He concentrated on changes that occurred in provincial administration. The major change was the introduction of elected officials in local government. According to Nosov, these reforms were beneficial to everyone except the peasants on the estates. The boyars at the court were affected most favorably and thus became aligned with the Tsar in his efforts of reform. He explained the political and economic causes of the alliance between the gentry and the boyars at court, while Zimin, who stated that this alliance existed, went no further than saying that both groups relied on the Tsar for their power.

S.O. Schmidt, yet another post-Stalin era historian of Ivan IV approached the Tsar's reign from a different direction. He specialized in the area of comparative history. He compared events and trends that occurred in sixteenth-century Russian society with those of other contemporary European

countries or other periods of Russian history. His work centered on the early portion of Ivan's reign. In his treatment of this period, he employed the traditional interpretation that a struggle between the gentry and the landowning aristocracy shaped contemporary history. His discussion of this topic was extremely complex as he attempted to describe the ever-shifting alliances between groups within the gentry and aristocracy. He warned against simplification of these alignments. Apart from his intuitive work in comparative history, Schmidt offered detailed analysis of small events that helped shape society.

The Russian historians who have written about the reign of Ivan IV are a heterogeneous group of scholars. It is simple to generalize and describe the periodization of Russian historical work on Ivan. Prior to the Revolution of 1917, historians debated mainly on the significance of Ivan's mental state in his policies. There were two predominant schools of thought on the Tsar in this period. The first was the St. Petersburg school, which was characterized by S.F. Platonov who believed that Ivan acted rationally in the establishment of the oprichnina. The second was the Moscow school to which V.O. Kliuchevskii belonged. These historians emphasized the mental condition of the Tsar in understanding his policies. Kliuchevskii and Platonov both claimed that there was a conflict between the traditional aristocracy and the rising ser-



vice gentry, but they also both agreed that the conflict was waged over immediate power and they did not stress the Marxist idea of socioeconomic causes of the oprichnina.

During Stalin's rule, historians followed the dictator's official view of Ivan as a great hero of Russian history. They idolized the Tsar and claimed that he was justified in his attempts to crush the aristocracy which stood in the way of his attempts at improving muscovite society. Following the 1956 meeting of historians at the Moscow branch of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, historians began to produce factual examinations of very specific events within Ivan's reign. They ushered in an era of originality with their monographic studies, but they failed to achieve their potential dynamism by neglecting to fully challenge the conclusions of their predecessors.

The historians of the late 1950's and 1960's worked within the basic foundation of the earlier historians, but they did it differently. The works of the period before 1956 are rife with ideological debates which have ended with large factions of historians who held similar views, but the works of the 1950's and 1960's offered many more personal interpretations by attempting more objective analyses of Muscovite society. Crummey has warned that the Soviets may become static as they appear to be decreasing their debating. The present generation of Soviet historians has shown another

limitation as well. Their numbers are much lower than in earlier periods and the most prominent publication of the time is Veselovskii's, but he had died in 1952.

Russian historians are relatively forgiving of the Tsar for his numerous atrocities. They present reasons why his persecution mania was understandable and the fact that he was typical of contemporary European rulers. A point that several English and American historians note is that the Russians historically forgive their tyrants.

A trait in several Soviet historical works that is absent in Western works is a reliance on a Marxist interpretation of history. They discuss the socioeconomic forces that shape society. In Ivan's reign, the class analysis concentrates on the rising servitor gentry, which fit into the emerging market economy, and their opposition, the traditional land-owning aristocracy which desired a resurgence of feudalism. Pokrovsky was one of the major proponents of this argument. Regardless of their acceptance of this view, all Russian historians realize that a brutal conflict occurred amongst the Muscovite people, but they have historically been willing to divert individual responsibility for it away from their leaders, past or present.

## II. American and English Historians

Ivan IV has become a frequent topic of study for American and English historians and biographers in the twentieth century. Many of the Russian works on Ivan are based on a class analysis that is absent in the American and English studies. The Western writers are less forgiving of Ivan's brutality than are the Russians. In the body of Western works, there is a wide range of interpretations of the value and purpose of Ivan's policies.

American and English accounts of Ivan's reign have often resembled biographies rather than historical analyses. The problem with biography is that it deals with the individual and neglects the society around him. Biographers also omit facts that weaken their story. As A.J.P. Taylor says: "The historian has to recognize that biography is a literary art, much nearer to fiction or poetry than it is to serious history."<sup>17</sup> When historians resort to biography rather than history, they tend to treat their subject as either good or evil, but nothing in between. American and English historians commonly fall into this trap. The Americans and English have produced everything from narrow analyses based on the Great Man theory of history which condemn Ivan to broad studies of sixteenth-century Russian society which discuss the Tsar's importance within the greater social framework.

Stephen Graham states that his Ivan the Terrible is a

biography rather than an historical analysis of the Tsar's reign. He dealt exclusively with events involving Ivan; all matters of Russian society were omitted. The focus of this work was precisely what Dubrovskii later warned against, but it cannot be ignored because it was the first English work on Ivan IV. It is a biography, but it was based on information within earlier historical analyses. Graham offered no conclusions about the value or legacy of Ivan's reign, but his choice of facts was sufficient to understand his view of the Tsar.

The most prevalent theme in Graham's writing is Ivan's deep devotion to religion. Every act centered on the grace of God. He showed his biographical style in this respect by, himself, attributing Ivan's success to God's satisfaction with the Tsar. Ivan's extreme religiousness increased the madness that Graham recognized. The Tsar would commit crimes and then repent profusely, but as time went on, he was stricken by guilt of his terrible transgressions which pushed him closer to insanity.

Graham was not excessively critical of Ivan, though he did not try to conceal the Tsar's brutality. He placed great blame on the aristocracy, as well as Ivan, for their conflict. He described the aristocrats' refusal to swear allegiance to Tsarevich Dmitrii during Ivan's illness in 1553 as a "plot". The choice of the word "plot" was extremely effective in diverting sole responsibility from Ivan for his imm-

ense suspicion of the aristocracy upon his recovery. While the boyars, who were the portion of the aristocracy which remained at court, were busy scheming for the usurpation of the Tsar's authority, he worked to achieve his goal of centralization of authority. He ruled piously and decided that the rules governing the Church and the state needed to be changed to facilitate the concentration of power in his hands. He was personally involved in the establishment of the new law code, but Graham suggested that his main motivation was centralization of the administration rather than improvement of Russian society in the interest of the peasantry.

Regardless of his intentions, he was wise and just in the years preceding 1560. He allowed the people to have a voice in their governance:

"He received petitions from all and sundry and for the first time in Russian history the poorest man in the country could have access of some kind to the sovereign. He was vigorous in the Council of the Boyars. There was freedom in that Council to have a point of view other than his own."<sup>18</sup>

The people, Graham asserted, enjoyed the possibility of being ruled by the Tsar instead of the boyars who had caused them such hardship. The aristocracy, as a whole, however, disapproved of his democratic methods. They felt threatened and thus, the conflict between the two powers, Tsar and aristocracy increased.

Graham claimed that Ivan wanted to replace the aristocracy with the service gentry, which was loyal to him, but

he was held back by the influence of Anastasia who said "let us fight the enemies of Russia, but not one another."<sup>19</sup>

While she lived, Ivan locked his rage within himself and outwardly forgave those who crossed his path. Graham claimed that Ivan's two advisors, Adashev and Sylvester who also restrained his ire, were driven away by Anastasia, not by Ivan. He said that she could not tolerate their manipulation of her husband.

Anastasia died in 1560 of an unknown ailment. Graham said that Ivan did not believe that she had been poisoned, but Graham, himself, posed the question of the possibility of such an occurrence. He said that it was odd that there were no records of her illness or of previous visits by doctors and that Andrei Kurbskii, in later years, allowed the idea a degree of credence. The effect of Anastasia's death, alleged Graham, was not that Ivan took his revenge on the aristocracy for poisoning her. It was that it removed the last restraint on Ivan's violent nature. The rage which was suppressed within him was released when his heart was dealt the grave blow of the loss of his wife.

Ivan began a reign of terror to root out the treachery which he saw all around him. Graham asserted that Ivan was actually safer than if he were a weak, forgiving ruler because "slaves and Slavs require a tyrant to rule over them."<sup>20</sup> Ivan's murderous ways took on a strange shape in the oprichnina which was meant to crush his opposition. Graham des-

cribed the confusion inherent in the structure of the oprichnina by demonstrating that Ivan was deeply religious while being an adherent to murder, sexual perversion, and all other forms of vice. The abdication in 1564, for example, was not a stratagem calculated to garner popular support; it was his greatest repentance. The fawning obedience of the society was simply a favorable result, instead of a motive.

Graham's work is a fairly accurate presentation of the events of Ivan's reign. One detriment to its historical validity, however, is Graham's tendency to fill gaps of information with conjecture in order to complete the story of the reign. An instance of this guesswork is his treatment of the correspondence between Ivan and Kurbskii. The validity of these letters is the subject of a debate among historians, but Graham described Ivan's thoughts and feelings while composing his replies to Kurbskii. This is clearly fabrication, but it does not greatly detract from the work because he was noncommittal in his conjecture.

Walther Kirchner's History of Russia was first published in 1948, at the height of the Soviet historians' idolizing Ivan. His writing reflected heavy reliance on the works of the Stalin period Soviet historians. He said that the Tsar's many accomplishments "anticipated future Russian development," and "research confirms such an interpretation."<sup>21</sup> The research to which he alluded was that of Soviets of the Stalinist view. He asserted that Ivan was successful in his bid

to reduce the power of the aristocracy, gaining support and expression in the zemsky sobor. Ivan assured the support of the gentry which owed its power to the pomeste' system, by removing the old aristocracy. The aristocracy, however, was not idle and presented strong opposition to the Tsar's plans. Kirchner asserted that Ivan responded to the resistance by undertaking a daring move to force the peasantry to align itself with him. The move was Ivan's retreat to Aleksandrova and it proceeded smoothly, resulting in the removal of all obstacles to persecution of the aristocracy.

Kirchner held that Ivan was responsible for a large body of reforms dealing with peasants, the Church, local administration, and a new code of law. Some of the reforms led to positive trends such as the expansion of local administration and the introduction of elected officials to it. The most important policy of Ivan's reign, though, was the oprichnina, Kirchner asserted. The apparent inconsistency of choice of lands that the oprichniki seized is clarified by understanding that the lands were chosen for their economic and military importance. While not completely rational, the oprichnina followed a basic framework that made it an effective tool for the Tsar to use to achieve his goals. The oprichnina successfully removed the land, power and court positions of the traditional aristocracy, but at the same time, "its brutality and inhuman ways of tax collection led to the flight of the



inhabitants and to depopulation."<sup>22</sup> All things considered, even though it was abandoned after only seven years, the oprichnina achieved its purpose of transforming Russian society and state structure.

Kirchner followed his analysis of Ivan's domestic policies with a discussion of the significance of the Tsar's foreign endeavors. Kirchner's contribution to this topic was his acceptance of the fact that many of Ivan's foreign policies came to naught. Their value lies in the fact that the direction of Russia's growth "was clearly conceived and definitely indicated as a future aim of Russian rulers,"<sup>23</sup> under Ivan IV.

Kirchner is important among non-Russian historians who have written on Ivan IV because he wrote during the time when Stalin ruled the Soviet Union and he was greatly influenced by the Soviet writers of the time. He openly stated that Ivan's policies paved the way for future developments in Russian society, but he did not adhere to Stalin's view that Ivan was a great and wise ruler. He acknowledged that Ivan's reign was riddled with brutality and illegality, but he said that these conditions do not alter the basic fact that Russian society greatly advanced while Ivan ruled. Kirchner's analysis of Ivan IV is but a small part of his study of Russian history, but he transcended a simple listing of the policies of the Tsar by describing the effects that these policies had on various aspects of society.

Harold Lamb dealt with the growth of Russia from 1400-1648, in his work, with special emphasis on the reign of Ivan IV. His work was first published in 1948 and his interpretation moderately reflects the influence of contemporary Soviet historians. He asserted that the result of Ivan's reign was the structure of the Russian state. Lamb did not idolize the Tsar, as Dubrovskii accused Wipper of doing, but he pointed out that Ivan shaped a people.

Lamb cited Kliuchevsky's work frequently, but he disagreed with Kliuchevsky's concentration on Ivan's personality. He felt quite the opposite: "Ivan had never been insane. Few men of his century had shown more intelligence; and few, if any, with so much to fear had evidenced such stark courage."<sup>24</sup> Sometimes, however, the Tsar became wrapped up in his own dream world based on legendary historical figures about whom he had read in his self tutelage. Ivan retreated into fantasies because he felt that those around him were enemies. Lamb did not contend that the Tsar was some detached figure who roamed the Kremlin, but rather asserted that Ivan implemented his policies envisioning a return to the prosperity of the era of "Moses and Tsar David"<sup>25</sup>--Ivan idolized the great men of the Bible.

The incontrovertible fact of Ivan's anger with the aristocracy was born of a combination of experiences and pressures. "Ivan had inherited a predisposition to fear and he had no one to confide in,"<sup>26</sup> asserted Lamb. As a child, Ivan

spent his time roaming the Kremlin discovering the aristocrats' crimes, such as stealing from the treasury. He was wise enough, however, to remain quiet about what he learned, but he would never forget. He began to see himself as a divinely appointed ruler and chose to assume the title of Tsar. Ivan also felt that he had to lead the Church from Moscow which was to be its third center, after Rome and Constantinople.

Lamb suggested that Ivan began to change around the time of his illness in 1553. He lashed out at his opponents for the first time. The aristocracy viewed this change as Ivan's growing desire to eliminate them as a class. Tensions increased and Ivan found himself opposing his advisors for the sake of disagreement. The oprichnina was the climax of this conflict. It was a brilliant move because it "combined the impoverishment of the boyar class with the improvement of the army."<sup>27</sup> Ivan's preoccupation with the serving class, the gentry, which made up the army, led Ivan to believe that the army was the state. Outside of the army, Ivan established no consistent rule. This was the nature of the division of the realm. Ivan's feeling of divine right grew to a point where he imagined that he was the builder of a totally new nation and the enemy of all things old. A recurrent theme in Lamb's writing is the idea that "a great actor was playing an extraordinary part."<sup>28</sup> Ivan was a brilliant tactician

and he did anything necessary to achieve his goals. He was adept at accomplishing his aims while ostensibly endeavoring under a separate pretense. A glaring example was his ability to make the oprichnina appear to be a popular, modernizing crusade while its real purpose was to eliminate his opposition.

Lamb stated that Ivan's thirst for progress became a lust for knowledge of foreign ideas and inventions. He retrieved his ambassadors from abroad and had them relay their experiences to him. He also imported many foreign artisans to Moscow. Several of these foreigners met with opposition on their attempts to enter Russia even though the Tsar had sent for them which was indicative of the fact that most Russians wished to avoid outside contact while Ivan cultivated it.

Lamb highlighted the long term effects of Ivan's reign more noticeably than the immediate effects. The Livonian War was a failure, but Ivan gained a foothold for contact with the West. The oprichnina caused widespread death and destruction, but it laid the foundations for a new society. Ivan was loved and feared by his people and he assumed a prominent place next to Dmitrii Donskoi and Alexander Nevsky in their legends. These assertions brought Lamb's interpretation of Ivan's reign to resemble contemporary Soviet historians' views, but he stopped short of calling Ivan a "great and wise" progressive leader.

Elizabeth Seeger's 1950 study of Russian history assigned

Ivan IV a prominent role in the drive to reform Muscovite society in the mid-sixteenth century. She portrayed the Tsar as a highly intelligent ruler who saw deficiencies and questioned the reasons for their existence. He asked "why so many thousands of monks were living idle in the many monasteries and what was being done with the enormous wealth that the Church was accumulating."<sup>29</sup> Ivan also advocated local self-government and a new law code based on the will of the people. According to Seeger, the ideas and patterns of the reforms were due to Ivan's personal initiative.

Seeger divided her analysis of Ivan IV into two parts: the good Ivan and Ivan the Terrible. The oprichnina was the embodiment of the "terrible" part of his reign and owed its existence to Ivan's hatred of the aristocracy. She pointed to three events that built the Tsar's distrust of the aristocracy. First, the poor treatment of Ivan and his brother at the hands of the boyars in their childhood planted the seeds of conflict. The second event was the boyars' refusal to swear allegiance to Ivan's son when Ivan was ill in 1553. They claimed that Ivan's son was acceptable, but "the Tsar-itsa's brothers who will rule us while your son is growing"<sup>30</sup> were cause for serious concern. Finally, Ivan's anger was solidified by his belief that the boyars had poisoned Anastasia in 1560. Seeger treated Ivan's retreat to Alexandrova as a manifestation of his severe paranoia about the treason that he believed surrounded him.

Her view of the oprichnina was that it was Ivan's way of depriving the aristocracy, which he suspected of treason, of their power. It had no pattern or plan. The oprichniki were selected by Ivan's whims. It was not a far-reaching policy that would transform society and send it on the road to modernization. It was the irrational child of an irrational mind. Seeger asserted, however, that there was one great product of the oprichnina: the conquest of Siberia by the Cossacks who fought for the Stroganov family which enjoyed membership in the oprichnina. Seeger stated that the Stroganovs owned estates in the East and saw the Tatars as a threat, so they hired the Cossacks to fight for them.

George Backer approached the study of Ivan IV in an original manner in his The Deadly Parallel: Stalin and Ivan the Terrible. He was not content with offering a simple presentation of the events of Ivan's reign. He provided an analysis of history and he used the changing interpretation of Ivan IV as his example. His thesis was that "history is only the recreation of the past in the image of the present."<sup>31</sup> He said that instead of history being the cause of the present, "history is the meaning the present gives to the past."<sup>32</sup> The plentitude of views on Ivan are proof of the idea. History is not static; it is a dynamic tool to reinforce the righteousness of one's actions. He believed that the interpretation of Ivan IV would continue to change and each time that it did, it would be a reflection of the values and standards

of the historian.

Many parallels between Ivan IV and Josef Stalin are readily apparent. Both undertook violent purges whose victims' guilt was largely a product of the ruler's paranoia. They also both succeeded in endeavors to expand the Russian state. Both leaders brought an end to oligarchic rule in Russia. They also increased the multi-national character of the nation.

Backer presented the account of Ivan's reign to provide background for his thesis. His analysis is riddled with statements that run counter to popular interpretations of the Tsar's reign. He asserted that the clergy, who educated Ivan in his youth, declared him of age at seventeen and that the government, not Ivan, was responsible for his coronation as Tsar. He also believed that the reform efforts of 1549 and 1550 were due to clergy within the government. Backer maintained that Ivan opposed improving the lives of the peasants because doing so would have meant granting them more freedom. Ivan, however, was most interested in strengthening the autocracy and he therefore needed to establish a powerful gentry whose power was based on service. Ivan had to provide the gentry with a workforce since they were needed at court and in the military. The peasants were the labor force that Ivan sought, so he reduced their freedom of movement. Backer's treatment of the Livonian War is a demonstration of the continuous nature of historical trends. He discussed the war from the European point of view, presenting the debate of

who was more dangerous, Russia or the Turks. The Europeans chose to side with the Turks against the danger of Russia and Backer claimed that enmity still exists between Russia and Europe, but now the United States has replaced the Turks in this enduring state of tension.

The oprichnina, Backer asserted, was Ivan's method of destroying the last vestiges of feudalism in Russia. Kurb-skii's flight to Lithuania was, after all, Backer claimed, an exercise of the feudal right of departure. Ivan was forced to choose between conceding to the aristocracy's ancient rights or destroying them for good. Ivan chose the latter and employed every resource in his power: "The State, to Ivan, now had meaning only as the instrument of his ambition."<sup>33</sup> Ivan's actions were all rationally thought out in instituting the oprichnina. His departure to Alexandrova Sloboda was intended to solicit a promise from the people that he could deal with the aristocracy in any way that he wanted. The oprichnina, on the whole, was meant to increase the Tsar's power and to more efficiently utilize the resources of the country in the war effort. Ivan effectively legalized the terror that he employed and again Backer suggested that history is constant: its chief characteristic--that of State within the State--was to survive as part of the Russian governmental system under the Soviets as the Cheka, which was later renamed O.G.P.U., N.K.V.D., and A.V.D. The final result of the oprichnina was the completed installation of the auto-



cratic concept. To describe the effects of the oprichnina, he used the accounts of Giles Fletcher who painted a picture of a devastated land. Peasants had no initiative. They were afraid of owning anything, for fear of losing their lives.

Backer's questioning of the interpretations of other historians led him to an original idea. He pondered the possibility that nineteenth century historians, such as V.O. Khluchevskii and N.M. Karamzin, who wrote that Ivan's happiest years were those spent with Anastasia of the House of Romanov, were influenced by the fact that they wrote under Tsars of the Romanov family. Backer admitted, however, that this was an unlikely and fairly ridiculous concept, but it showed that he thought seriously about the sources which he used for his work.

Backer's assertion that Ivan's reign set the stage for the future of Russia was best illustrated as, "the Russia that he forged was, by the violence of its birth, the true ancestor of the state which, in 1917, was torn from the agony of the First World War."<sup>34</sup> Backer went on to demonstrate that many of Stalin's actions following World War II had the same intentions as Ivan's policies four centuries earlier: expansion to the West and South. Backer claimed that Ivan's reign gave birth to the idea that the state had an extrahuman personality and therefore a destiny of its own. Subsequent rulers have employed this concept to justify their action. Backer claimed that this concept of the state has caused Western

historians to view Ivan as an evil perpetrator of crimes against humanity. Soviet historians, on the other hand, have values based on this concept and can therefore see Ivan as a great and wise ruler. As an example, he quoted Wipper who blamed the boyars for the brutality of the oprichnina because they "were too stupid to accept the personal deprivations necessary for the growth of the greatness of the state."<sup>35</sup>

Backer did not stop at providing parallels between Ivan and Stalin, he addressed refutations of his theory. The most obvious argument against the parallel is that Stalin's rule was characterized by communism. Backer retorted by pointing out that both Ivan IV and Stalin ruled in strict dictatorships. Communism was simply the method of control that Stalin used. Ivan, however, also exercised stringent control of the economy to solidify his power. The only way that the dictatorships differed was in the degree to which they employed their instruments of control. Both reduced the standard of living of the lower classes to subsistence existences in order to increase their own power and authority.

Jules Koslow, whose work on Ivan IV appeared in 1961, is vulnerable for his style and approach to the Tsar and his reign. He followed the view of the central role of Ivan's personality in the oprichnina. He discarded the idea that Ivan was in any way a reformer. He asserted that Ivan was dedicated to increasing the power of the autocracy while being engaged in a battle against the aristocracy which he feared

and hated. Ivan learned to hate the boyars early in his life when "The boyars fed us [Ivan and his younger brother, Yuri] as though we were foreigners or the most wretched menials."<sup>36</sup> Koslow's style in presenting this quote is indicative of his major fault. He did not cite sources, thus the validity of the origins of his quotes is always questionable. This quote appeared in J.L.L. Fennell's Correspondence Between Prince A.M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV. The lack of any citations cloaked the distinction between quotes and Koslow's personal opinions.

Koslow built on the tension between Tsar and aristocracy by claiming that Ivan's illness in 1553, when the boyars refused to swear allegiance to the Tsarevich, was the final blow to all possibilities of good relations between the two parties. Ivan set up the oprichnina in 1565 in order to break "the influence and power of old boyar groups by dispossessing them of their lands, and thus impoverishing them."<sup>37</sup> The brutality of the oprichnina was the result of the combination of Ivan's mental condition and the personality of the society as a whole. Koslow stated that when Ivan returned to Moscow from Alexandrova Sloboda in 1565, "he appeared to be on the verge of a mental and physical breakdown."<sup>38</sup> Koslow also said that cruelty was a fact of life in sixteenth-century Muscovy and therefore, Ivan was not seen by the people as a terrible aberration. The Tsar was also taught early in life

that pity, kindness, and compassion were not appropriate traits of a ruler. Ivan created a band of reckless, brutal oprichniki whose company he found greatly pleasing. Koslow claimed that the main aim of the oprichnina, the destruction of the aristocracy, was not accomplished. The oprichniki could never completely crush the aristocracy, but became, instead, a check against its power. The problem was that it was "directed against people, not a system."<sup>39</sup> It was therefore a pillar of Ivan's autocratic strength, but it failed to alter the system of government that had existed for centuries.

Koslow not only believed that the oprichnina had little effect on the the future of Russia, but he refused to think that any aspect of Ivan's reign caused enduring trends in Russian society. Koslow fell into the trap that Dubrovskii warned about in 1956: he concentrated on Ivan's personality to the exclusion of attention to the development of the society which Ivan ruled. Whereas Soviet historians of the late 1950's and 1960's were adhering to Dubrovskii's advice, Koslow chose the path of earlier Russian historians, such as V.O. Kliuchevskii. Another flaw in Koslow's work was that he was all too willing to use convenient facts and disregard data that conflicted with his thesis. He took all reports of Ivan's mental imbalance at face value and judged the Tsar's claims of treason to be the workings of his twisted mind. Ivan's paranoia was embodied in an obsessive fear that he

would be assassinated. This fear was solidified by the defection of Prince Kurbskii to Lithuania. Ivan thereafter hated to be in the Kremlin and retreated to Alexandrova where he wrote to the common people that he was abdicating his throne. Koslow made no mention of the common idea that the Tsar did this to exact support for his plans to crush the aristocracy.

Koslow's treatment of Ivan's personal actions was inconsistent. On the one hand, he portrayed Ivan as a cruel product of a brutal society whose one period of kindness was caused by Anastasia and ended after her death. On the other hand, he showed Ivan's cruelty to be caused by his mental illness, not social norms. The inconsistencies, lack of citations, and disregard for inconvenient facts demonstrate that Jules Koslow's work is a biography, not an historical study of Ivan IV. There was no discussion of different views or beliefs, just organization of facts to fit the desired storyline.

Ian Grey followed the idea that Ivan IV was a product of his age. Cruelty and violence surrounded him. Ivan's personality occupied a central role in the events of his reign. He showed many characteristics of a manic depressive, but the Tsar was exposed to such grotesque violence, especially in his youth, that he can hardly be blamed for showing the effects of such trauma. Grey did not see Ivan the Terrible; he saw Tsar Ivan IV, "the Tsar "to be feared" in the

sense that the Lord is to be feared."<sup>40</sup> It was a violent time and Ivan was a product thereof, not an aberration.

Ivan was an emotional, compassionate ruler as he showed in 1549 when he appeared before the people and exclaimed that he would take care of them. His speech denounced the aristocracy which was responsible for the plight of the peasants. It was more than just a coincidence that the aristocracy was also Ivan's major opposition. Ivan derived support from the peasants and gentry against their common enemies.

Grey stated that Ivan's attacks against the aristocracy began in 1560 when the Tsar appeared to transform from the pious ruler into the brutal incarnate of evil who was to bring his country to its knees. Grey asserted that the change was only real outwardly. The violence and brutality had been present previously, but had been held in check by Anastasia, Sylvester, and Adashev, all of whom were loyal to Ivan by 1560. The Tsar blamed the aristocracy for Anastasia's death because it was apparent to him that they harbored great hostility toward her. After all, they had refused to swear loyalty to her and Dmitrii in 1553 because she posed a threat to their potential power upon the Tsar's death. Grey denied Ivan's charges against the aristocracy, citing the fact that there was never any proof of her poisoning.

The event which resulted in the oprichnina, according to Grey, was the defection of Andrei Kurbskii to Lithuania. Ivan saw tangible proof of the treason which he believed was

pervasive amongst the boyars. "He saw in Kurbsky not an individual who had fled from just punishment but the representative of the whole boyar-princely class, voicing their implacable malevolence towards him."<sup>41</sup> Ivan set up the oprichnina to destroy the aristocracy. Grey admitted that the pattern of land confiscation was not indicative of a rationally implemented policy, but he tried to decipher this puzzle by breaking the land seizures into three categories according to geographical location. His solution is unsatisfactory because each category encompasses a separate broad region and collectively the three regions include most of the realm. He simply broke the seizures into those in the central region, those in the northern provinces, and those in an area "from Vologda and Galich in the northeast of Moscow around to Mozhaïsk in the west, where the oprichniki were mainly settled on estates."<sup>42</sup> This analysis did not explain the pattern of land confiscation,; it only described it.

Grey's interpretation of the purpose of the oprichnina is, above all, honest. He began by stating that Ivan's goals were unclear. Then he continued with a discussion of the argument among historians on the subject. He said that no coherent pattern was discernible in the oprichnina's implementation. Grey's entire work on Ivan was adequately summarized by his statement that:

"...it would seem that Ivan himself was unclear as to his basic purpose. His immediate purpose was, however, clear. This was the creation of a separate

domain under his direct and personal control, where he could feel secure."<sup>43</sup>

Grey did not provide any original conclusions of, or brilliant insights into Ivan's reign. His work is a "safe" analysis of the Tsar. He occupied a position between the views of the Soviets and those of the West. He neither idolized nor apologized for him. He dealt with the Tsar, not the society, so he felt secure in avoiding extremities in conclusions.

George Vernadsky, alone among American and English historians, centered his work on the society which Ivan ruled. Through such analysis, he was able to return to the person of the Tsar and present his own conclusions. His study of Ivan is part of his voluminous study of Russian history which he obviously based on extensive, meticulous research. His accounts of the events of Ivan's reign are very detailed and include the names of many people who were involved. His work presents the impression of scientific methodology while a majority of the other works on Ivan leave the feeling that Ivan was sixteenth-century Russia personified.

Vernadsky's coverage of Ivan starts with the idea that the Tsar suffered from a mental condition which began early in his life due to his experiences growing up at the mercy of the boyars. He became obsessed with his family's safety and with religious matters. When Anastasia died, Ivan blamed Adashev, Sylvester, and Kurbskii. Vernadsky contended that it was Ivan who was to blame for he undertook frequent pil-



grimaces and always insisted that Anastasia accompany him. These trips made her weary and weakened her physical condition following her several bouts with illness.

In many matters of state, Vernadsky dealt with the issues and policies as a whole, rejecting the idea that Ivan was a driving force behind reform and modernization. He credited a faction of wise, compassionate members of the Muscovite government for recognizing the need for reforms and for drawing up the new law and Church codes. The belittlement of Ivan's role extended into international affairs as well. Vernadsky attributed the desire for contact with the West to the "Moscow government,"<sup>44</sup> never specifically mentioning Ivan. In a study such as this, the Tsar's involvement is not a prerequisite for an event's analysis. Vernadsky studied the society which the Tsar ruled, not the Tsar who ruled the society.

The conflict that arose between the Tsar and the aristocracy was very real according to Vernadsky. He stated that even before Ivan's illness in 1553, certain boyars considered measures to replace him with a leader more to their liking; probably Ivan's cousin, Prince Vladimir Andreevich Staritsky. Ivan was suspicious of the aristocracy since his childhood and apparently some of his fears were founded, but he let his imagination about treason run wild. Vernadsky assigned most of the blame to Ivan, however, because of his continuous, excessive fear. The Tsar's fear of the aristocracy precipi-

tated the bizarre events of December 1564. Ivan felt treachery on all sides and he had to choose between crushing his opposition and resigning the throne. He chose the former by way of the latter. He was a very intelligent, albeit, disturbed, man. He resigned "in such a way that it would not be accepted by the people and that he would instead be given full authority to take repressive measures against his enemies, real or alleged."<sup>45</sup>

Vernadsky maintained that Ivan's inability to agree with the aristocracy on military matters ultimately led to the establishment of the oprichnina. The aristocracy believed that the army should be concentrated in the South to fight the Tatars and Ivan thought that Livonia deserved the greatest attention. As for the purposes of the oprichnina, it was designed to remove all obstacles to Ivan's absolute authority and to ensure the Tsar's personal safety. The obstacles to his power were not solely the aristocrats, but men from any class whom he deemed necessary to remove. Vernadsky gave no credence to the argument that the oprichnina was the climax of a complex social struggle between the traditional aristocracy and Ivan and his supporting service gentry. The pattern of land division between the oprichnina and the zemschina was too erratic to be the product of a coherent plan. In addition to the confusing pattern of confiscation, the estates that were seized were not always turned over to the gentry. Ivan's treasury was often the recipient of confis-

cated lands. Furthermore, Vernadsky pointed out that the policy of land redistribution could have been amply accomplished without the oprichnina's violence.

Vernadsky was completely unforgiving in summarizing the effects of the oprichnina. It was devastating to the Muscovite economy which was already damaged by the Livonian War. Tantamount to the economic hardship that the country experienced was the decline in the people's morale and the "psychological depression of the nation."<sup>46</sup> Vernadsky suggested though, that:

"...perhaps the most tragic result of the oprichnina terror was the destruction of so many gifted personalities. The elite of Russian society had been decimated."<sup>47</sup>

Robert Payne and Nikita Romanoff presented a classic Western interpretation of the reign of Ivan IV. The value that they placed on his reign was brilliantly summarized by their comment that "His greatest gift to the Russian people was his own death."<sup>48</sup> They said that Ivan's reign had a good first half and a "terrible" second half, but they did not claim that the oprichnina, which was the greatest terror, was followed by a seminormal period. They treated the years 1560-1583 as a time of unthinkable violence. Ivan realized the nature of his crimes, but he continued to perpetrate his evil.

The Tsar's early years were spent genuinely trying to rule for the good of the land. Payne and Romanoff attributed much of Ivan's good will and restraint to the presence of

Anastasia and his advisors, Adashev and Sylvester. Payne and Romanoff minimized the credit ascribed to Ivan for the plentiful reforms of the 1550's. They felt that the Tsar's speech to an assembly of churchmen at the Kremlin in 1551 was not entirely sincere: "Ivan's mea culpa would have been more impressive if it had come from the heart; it is too contrived to be altogether convincing."<sup>49</sup> They contended that much of Ivan's popularity arose from a common belief that he was the force behind the reforms. He was exalted more highly than Alexander Nevsky and Dmitrii Donskoi in the Russians' legends.

Payne and Romanoff dealt with the change in Ivan's character with an air of condemnation and a touch of sympathy. He was timid and suspicious of most people surrounding him. His fears grew until they consumed him and he became preoccupied with rooting out imaginary sedition. He was mentally ill and his rage could not be restrained after the deaths of Anastasia and Adashev and the exile of Sylvester. He knowingly indulged in every conceivable form of vice. He was not completely at fault; however, there was no choice for him. He was raised to believe that he was divinely appointed. His crimes struggled with his conscience increasingly, until he was driven to extreme depths of madness and evil. He became increasingly mechanical in the performance of his violent acts.

The oprichnina, which Payne and Romanoff asserted, could only be duplicated in the twentieth century, was Ivan's great-

est act of evil. It was inconsistent in its choice of lands for no reason of rational policy. They also rejected the idea that the oprichnina was a carefully planned measure to strike a fatal blow to the landed aristocracy in order to strengthen the autocracy: "In time a myth grew up that Ivan was pursuing a carefully formulated social and political policy to bring about the annihilation of the boyar class."<sup>50</sup> They claimed that a major purpose of the myth was to allow Stalin to claim that his actions were justified. They made one small attack on Wipper's work, saying that he was errant in stating that Ivan understood society and that he was attempting to improve the state for the people. Ivan may not have understood the broad social forces, but he did understand people's fears. His false abdication in 1564 was an example of this understanding. It was a measure calculated to drum up the support of the common man. He told the people that he had to leave because of the treason of the aristocracy. They asserted that "he did not abdicate; he accused."<sup>51</sup>

Payne and Romanoff denied the Soviet view that Ivan was a "great and wise ruler"; however, they avoided the hardline view that everything involved in his reign was evil, as well. Their argument was that he was not a visionary who fought to transform society into the modern state form. There were some positive effects of his rule, such as the building of the Russian empire: "Ivan was the true founder of this empire,

which would always bear the imprint of his character, his violence, his rages, his towering ambitions, his pride and strange humility."<sup>52</sup> They also dealt with his desire for contacts in the West which was a case of futuristic vision. They covered the arts in Ivan's reign extensively. It was a time of destruction, but a time of building as well. St. Basil's Cathedral is the most famous work of architectural art in his reign, but there was also much music and writing which originated from this period. A serious contradiction appears in their treatment of Ivan's positive accomplishments. Whereas at one point, they said that the empire was shaped by the Tsar's personality, they later claimed that he was fortunate in his successes. He simply backed into success, they claimed. If indeed he was the timid ruler that they depicted, he would have experienced difficulty in forging an empire in his image.

David MacKenzie and Michael Curran compiled A History of Russia and the Soviet Union in 1977. They prefaced their work by stating that they rejected the Marxist tendency of forcing events in history into inflexible, predetermined patterns. They also denied that political change must always be preceded by socioeconomic change. They further asserted that while the Russian economy contained features of feudalism between 860 and 1861, it would be incorrect to describe Russian society of this period as feudalistic. They described

their view of Russian history as following "middle course between the geographical determinism of the Eurasian school and the organic, inner-oriented approach of Soviet and many 19th-century Russian historians."<sup>53</sup>

MacKenzie and Curran assigned Ivan a prominent role in the development of Russian autocracy. They subscribed to the view of Ivan as mistreated by the boyars in his youth. They also believed in the existence of the Chosen Council which many historians asserted never existed. They deprived Ivan of any role in initiating the reforms and calling the zemskii sobor of 1550. The idea of building a strong army on the service of the new gentry was posed to the Tsar by a leader of the gentry, Ivan S. Peresvetov. The list of questions intended to effect reforms in the Church which bore Ivan's name was actually drawn up by the Council, according to MacKenzie and Curran.

MacKenzie and Curran asserted that Ivan's break with the Council that led to the oprichnina occurred before Anastasia's death which is commonly seen as the cause of Ivan's violent moods. The oprichnina and his initial step of abdicating to gain the support of the commoners were rational measures in his drive to crush his opponents. They maintained that Ivan was not acting solely to destroy the aristocracy. He saw treason at all levels and he wanted to remove it. The reduction of the power of the aristocracy was a result of the

execution of the oprichnina. It benefitted Ivan because it removed a barrier to his complete authority. They said that, in the end, the oprichnina was unsuccessful and divisive.

They presented, in their work, a series of "problems" which are events that are characterized by serious interpretational debates among historians. The oprichnina was the third problem that they covered. They provided a short historiographical analysis of the oprichnina, stressing the differences between Soviet and Western views. They concluded their analysis of the oprichnina by saying "Farsighted in some ways, nearsighted in others, Ivan and his reign should neither be glorified nor totally condemned."<sup>54</sup> Russian society and economy were devastated at the end of Ivan's reign and a case can be made that the Time of Troubles was a direct result of the Tsar's actions, but the foundations for strong centralized administration and expansion of the state were implemented in the reign of Ivan IV.

Francis Carr devoted the first third of his study of Ivan IV to establishing the conditions of the society which Ivan came to rule. The importance of the Mongol military and administrative functions which were learned and copied in Muscovy were delineated. Carr believed that the collective psyche of the Russian people was a vital component of the Tsar's effectiveness. According to Carr, the Russians are and were a submissive people:



"The Russians spare their tyrants; they kill only those monarchs that lack barbarity. Here we see the basic weakness of the Russian people--their frightening passivity, their acceptance of their roles as members of a giant community, not as individuals with definite human rights."<sup>55</sup>

Carr employed the same argument in discussing Ivan's abdication in 1564. He asserted that in any other country, Ivan's maneuver would have cost him his throne. The people's obedience facilitated the action. The Tsar lowered his defenses and dared his enemies to seize the moment, which played on the fear of the common man. Paradoxically, Ivan's weakness made him stronger than ever. The people panicked like "bees in a hive, deprived of their queen."<sup>56</sup> The Tsar's luck held--the aristocracy refused to act against him.

The only praise that Carr could muster for Ivan in regards to the oprichnina was that he was honest on his return to Moscow from Alexandrova when he demanded free reign to dispose of his enemies without interference. Apart from this, he described the oprichnina as a microcosm of hell. He used the accounts of foreign travellers to illustrate the savagery. Many of these foreigners wrote second-hand accounts which were greatly exaggerated, but he found that they showed considerable correlation on the fact that the oprichnina was brutal beyond compare. But was it the work of a cold, calculating killer? Carr pointed out many signs of a mental disorder in Ivan. First of all, he claimed that the patchwork pattern of oprichnina lands was irrational and simply bol-

stered the country's pervasive confusion. Secondly, he noted that the severity of the attacks may have been the result of Ivan's introversion. The Tsar acted rashly and then fell into sessions of remorse. This cycle hammered away at Ivan's conscience until he institutionalized the killing. Finally, while the oprichnina was supposedly meant to crush the aristocracy, many others suffered greatly. Carr ignored the fact that the brutal subjugation of the peasantry may have been undertaken in order to strengthen the financial position of the service gentry which relied on peasant labor.

The major drawback in Carr's work is his reliance on convenient facts and exclusion of contradictory information. He viewed Ivan as intellectually overmatched by many of his aides. This, he claimed, was the cause of many problems. Ivan could not tolerate being surrounded by those who did not understand his omniscience and divine right. He did not even mention the fact that a majority of the studies on Ivan acknowledge that he was very intelligent and well-read. He also stated that "Kurbsky and most of his boyars wished to assist their Tsar as responsible ministers."<sup>57</sup> Earlier, he described the court intrigues during Ivan's childhood, but here he wrote as if the aristocracy's lust for power suddenly disappeared. His is a one-sided argument. He excluded contrary data in an effort to accentuate Ivan's madness and cruelty, but he weakened his credibility by ignoring the "other" truth.

Carr spent an excessive amount of time detailing numerous tortures, rapes, murders, and other atrocities of the oprichnina. His analysis leaves no question of the Tsar's brutality. He went so far as to quote from the Old Testament to describe the harvest failures which resulted from the oprichnina: "it hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal; if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up."<sup>58</sup> In instances such as this, Carr tended to be somewhat theatrical in eliciting a desired effect.

Carr's conclusion is full of facts and statistics that depict a country that has been to hell and back. He told of desertion of peasant homes en masse in northern and western Russia. Novgorod's population was reduced to 20 percent of its former size. Villages were empty. Overall, the country was in ruin. Ivan's refusal to accept a favorable armistice with Sigismund resulted in the loss of all of the Russians' gains in the North. Ivan's reign, in Carr's opinion, was a failure on all fronts. His greatest legacy was that future tyrants employed his methods. Peter the Great, Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler all exacted the same submissive loyalty from their people as Ivan had done. In this respect, "the screams of Ivan's many victims can still be heard."<sup>59</sup>

Thomas Butson's presentation of Ivan IV in a series of books entitled World Leaders Past and Present is remarkably thoughtful for a work of its kind. Butson dealt with Russia as it fit into the world of the sixteenth century. He used

quotes of foreign travellers to Russia extensively, to support his ideas. He also explained that Ivan, in the years preceding the oprichnina, was no more cruel than other European rulers, such as King Henry VIII of England and Catherine de Medici of France. Before 1560, Ivan strove for modernization and took the advice of his council to heart. In fact, he allowed them to openly criticize him when they felt it was deserved. Butson gave the council the credit for initiating the call for a new law code. According to Butson, they urged Ivan to call a zemsky sobor in 1550. Once the movement began, Ivan took the lead and oversaw an overhaul of many areas of Russian society. Butson insisted, however, that judicial affairs remained terribly backward. Many people were simply assumed to be guilty and exposed to sadistic tortures. Even though this gross iniquity remained, the Tsar truly wanted to improve the life of the average Russian.

Butson said that the oprichnina was more a result of a lack of any restraining influence on Ivan than some sudden new event. Ivan had been in almost constant argument with the aristocracy in the 1560's over the Livonian War. Anastasia, the most calming force in Ivan's life, died in 1560. Ivan's moods took the final turn toward violence in 1563 when Metropolitan Makary, the last positive influence in the Tsar's life, and Ivan's younger brother, Yuri, both died. Butson detailed Ivan's abdication and move to Alexandrova Sloboda in 1564, but he was very unclear in providing the reasons

for it. He did not claim to adhere to either of the possible interpretations: that Ivan was acting in a rational manner in order to exact a promise of a free hand in subjugating the aristocracy or that he had a serious mental condition which forced him to act irrationally.

It was not until Ivan's return to Moscow and the establishment of the oprichnina that Ivan displayed signs of "a severe emotional crisis...He suffered from nightmares and hallucinations. His eyes were dulled."<sup>60</sup> Ivan was overcome with paranoia over the possibility of treason amongst those who surrounded him. His fear had its roots in the poor treatment that he endured at the hands of the boyars in his childhood. Butson stressed the boyars' cruelty by beginning his work with the story of the group of boyars who burst into the 11-year old Ivan's room while he was asleep, to search for Metropolitan Joseph. He emphasized the fear that the young Ivan experienced by ending this account with the comment that when the boyars left, "they threw a last look of contempt at the terrified Ivan and left to continue their search. He would not forget."<sup>61</sup>

The purpose of the oprichnina was to deprive the aristocracy of its power and thus avoid the situation that had occurred in Poland when the aristocracy had basically caused anarchy. Ivan replaced the aristocracy with pomestchiki of the gentry whose landholding was contingent on loyal service

to the Tsar. Ivan followed this action up by providing the gentry with a permanent labor force, the serfs who were now bound to the land indefinitely. With this action, Ivan had extended his absolutist rule to the lowest class in society and solidified the Russian autocracy.

Ivan's reign was not a mere blemish on Russian history. Butson pointed out that Ivan "transformed the country from a collection of petty fiefdoms into a true national state, and he brought Russia into the wider European arena."<sup>62</sup> He also strengthened the centralized administration of the government. His actions facilitated increasing contact with the ideas and inventions of Western Europe. He was also responsible for establishing lasting trade ties with the English and the Dutch. Russia had doubled in size during Ivan's reign. He destroyed the last remnants of the feudal order and paved the way for modernization. Overall, Butson asserted that Ivan was "a strong man for a time when a strong man had been needed."<sup>63</sup>

An examination of Benson Bobrick's Fearful Majesty is a logical conclusion in a study of this kind because it is not only the most recent of the non-Russian works, but it is a synthesis of considerable previous research. His sources range from Platonov, Skrynnikov, and Veselovskii to Koslow and Backer for the biographies of the Tsar and he used numerous studies covering myriad topics of sixteenth century

Russian society. Bobrick did not profess to provide any original revelations about the reign of Ivan IV which is his strength. He pulled together the views and research of many writers and filled in the spaces with his own research and ideas. He based his work on the framework that pits Ivan against the aristocracy. The new service class, the gentry, shared the Tsar's interests and joined forces with him in his quest to displace the aristocracy.

Bobrick devoted considerable time to covering Ivan's policies that were separate from the oprichnina. Ivan planned to effect broad reforms involving military, financial, judicial, and centralized governmental administration and the Church in 1549, asserted Bobrick. The Tsar was most heavily influenced by Ivan Peresvetov, a West Russian, who recommended fair and consistent judicial practices, manumission of slaves, and military restructuring. The suggested military changes included establishment of a standing army in which promotion was based on merit, not heredity. This was the basis of the pomeste' landholdings which gave the gentry its power and tied its interests intrinsically to Ivan's. Bobrick claimed that the purpose of the reforms was to strengthen the central administration through increased revenue, a more vigorous judiciary, and a strong, well-trained army.

Ivan's sweeping reforms and view to the future facilitated the atrocities of the 1560's and 1570's. The Tsar saw

that the pomeste' system of landholding for military service was the foundation of Russia's army. But most of the land was tied up in hereditary estates, votchina, or belonged to the Church. Ivan realized that he needed to provide more land throughout the country to the gentry, but he could not simply take votchina or Church lands without provocation. He needed a believable excuse to seize the necessary lands.

Ivan found justification for harsh action against the aristocracy, whose interests clashed with his, in the increasing seditious opposition in which the aristocracy was involved, in the 1550's and 1560's. On this topic, Bobrick extensively utilized the correspondence between Ivan and Prince Andreii Kurbskii who had fled to Lithuania. Ivan, Bobrick believed, wrote "a remarkable 28,000-word rebuttal that included a defense of autocracy and intimate revelations about the unhappiness of his childhood,"<sup>64</sup> in reply to Kurbskii's attacks on Ivan's cruelty. Bobrick saw Ivan's initiation of the oprichnina as a completely rational response to growing opposition in the traditional aristocracy and the need for more land for the pro-crown gentry. Bobrick asserted that "To impress upon the nation the extremity of his frustration and resentment, he abdicated and did so too in a manner that was both theatrical and deliberately mystifying to all but his inner circle."<sup>65</sup> Ivan followed this action by sending a letter to the merchants and common men for whom he held no contempt. The message reminded the crowds of the evils of the



aristocracy. The result was growing anti-aristocratic sentiment and increased desperation over the need to procure the return of the Tsar who was their protector against the brutal aristocracy.

Ivan returned to Moscow after being told by the people that they wanted him to have freedom to do as he wished in order to save the country. Bobrick stated that Ivan instituted the oprichnina to break the power of the aristocracy, giving land to the gentry and setting up the pattern of government that his sons could rule within. There were excesses initially, to be sure, but they were the result of corruption among the oprichniki who began to allow torture to dominate their methods of intimidation. Bobrick asserted, however, that the oprichnina was rationally executed throughout. The inconsistency of the choice of lands to be brought into the oprichnina is thought by many historians to be a sign of Ivan's madness, but Bobrick explained that "oprichnina holdings were interspersed with zemschina land in a crazy-quilt patchwork improvised to prevent the zemschina from comprising an integrated or continuous realm."<sup>66</sup>

The pattern of land may have been calculated, but Bobrick admitted that the atrocities brought down upon thousands of boyars and merchants were products of Ivan's obsession with perceived threats to his personal safety: "The purges had no discernible social goal. The issue was treason, most of it imaginary."<sup>67</sup> This idea contradicts Bobrick's earlier

assertion that the expropriation of diverse landholdings was the logical fulfillment of the oprichnina's objectives. In one instance, he stated that the oprichnina followed rational policy and in another, that it victimized an immense group of people whose backgrounds reflected the approximate makeup of the whole society. How can the same program efficiently execute forcible, but rational, land possession measures while also operating a brutal reign of terror whose victims' guilt was questionable at best?

Bobrick followed his analysis of the oprichnina by detailing later accomplishments such as the conquest of Siberia which compensated "for the loss of Polotsk and Livonia."<sup>68</sup> Bobrick finished his work by describing how the epithet "The Terrible" was attached to Ivan's name:

"Whatever the early accomplishments of his reign, or the historical trends to which they may have been attuned, calamities substantially of his own creation overwhelmed them, and the scourge of his epithet remains."<sup>69</sup>

Herein lies the core of Bobrick's interpretation of Ivan. The Tsar was responsible for many positive reforms and for many horrifying atrocities, but his importance to history rests in the patterns which he effected that would later make Russia the great land that it became. Bobrick accordingly prefaced his work by saying that to understand modern Russia, one must look at the Muscovy of Ivan's time for "Traces of Muscovy continue to this day, and are broadly reflected in everything from popular customs to government organizations

and foreign relations."<sup>70</sup>

Historical analyses and biographies of Ivan IV by American and English authors do not fall into well defined categories or periods as the Russian historical works do. The non-Russian writers rely heavily on Russian works as sources, but they present a wide range of different views. A majority of them concentrate on Ivan himself, rather than on society in general. While many of the Russian works are intended, in some degree, to diminish the individual responsibility that Ivan holds for the grave suffering of sixteenth-century Russia, the American and English writers, in general, make clear the fact that they place ultimate accountability on Ivan. Some Americans, such as George Backer and Francis Carr, have centered their works on the idea that Russian society was to blame for allowing Ivan to carry on his brutality.

The concept of Russian acceptance of tyrants has caused another difference between Russian and Western works. Many Westerners were able to write, during Stalin's rule, that the Russian historians, such as Wipper, meekly accepted Stalin's view of Ivan's reign, regardless of their own feelings. Walther Kirchner was one of the few Western historians who employed the Stalinist approach in his writing. There has been no strict periodization of works on Ivan in the West. Kirchner's study appeared in 1948 and Backer's Deadly Parallel was first published in 1950 at the height of Soviet historians'

idolizing of Ivan. These two works appeared within two years of each other and, yet, they are at opposite ends of the spectrum of interpretations of Ivan. Backer's work alleged that both Ivan and Stalin were cruel, irrational leaders, a concept that would never have appeared in print in Stalin's Soviet Union. Kirchner's work claimed that Ivan facilitated Russia's move into the future.

The range of interpretations in Western historical works on Ivan involves the degree to which Ivan, alone, deserves the blame for the oprichnina's terror, rather than debating whether Ivan was a wise, farseeing ruler or an imbalanced tyrant. Most Western historians agree that Ivan was at least partially irrational; only a few argue that his policies were reasonable and successful. Authors' views of several events in Ivan's reign--the retreat to Alexandrova Sloboda in 1564, the Tsar's illness in 1553, the concept of Anastasia's poisoning in 1560, and the validity of assertions of aristocratic sedition--serve as barometers of the degree of rationality which Western historians attribute to the Tsar. Overall, the general view of Ivan, in American and English works, seems to be that his reign succeeded in expanding the Russian state and establishing contacts with the West, but was a disaster in the domestic sphere. It is generally maintained that Russia would have reached the same level of modernization in the future, though perhaps in a different manner, if Ivan had never come to power.

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## Endnotes

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